

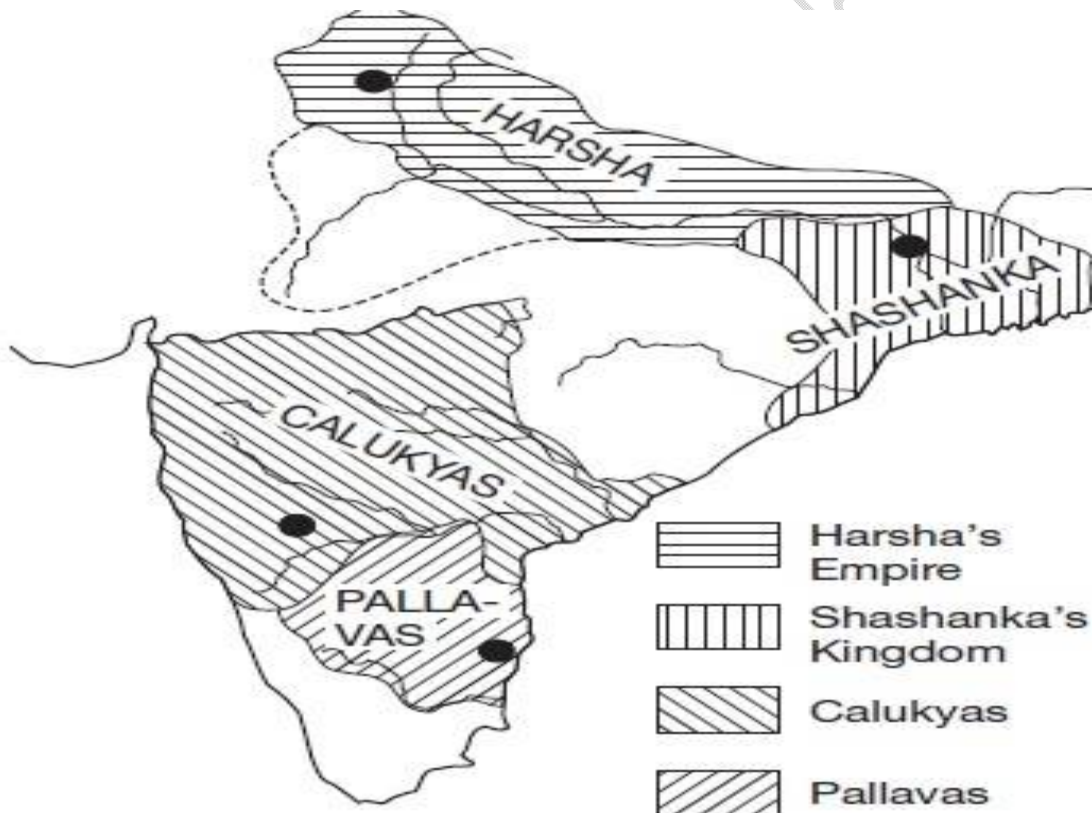
Topic

POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE CHALUKYAS OF BADAMI OR VATAPI WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PULAKESIN-II

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Regional kingdoms in the early seventh century

The Chalukyas had originally been tributary princes under the Kadamba dynasty which ruled the Kanara coast from about the fourth century. In the sixth century, the first Chalukya king Pulakeshin I established his capital at Vatapi (Badami) and celebrated the great horse sacrifice so as to declare his independence from the Kadambas.

The Chalukya dynasty ruled the Deccan Plateau and adjoining areas for more than six centuries and then faded from the historical narrative of the Indian sub-continent, as so many had done before and since. They rose to power in the sixth century A.D., and ruled up to the last quarter of eighth century A.D. **Pulakesin-II, was the greatest king of the early Chalukyas of Badami. The central family was established in Badami in early 6th century. They were ambitious and capable, creating a vast Empire within the span of little over a century.** Their self-confidence is demonstrated by the kings setting up their brothers as powerful viceroys in conquered areas and more importantly by later sanctioning these off-shoots to set up sibling dynasties independent of the principal group. The subsidiary dynasties were established in the periphery of the core Empire; in the east around Vengi, and in the west with Kalyani as capital. The Kalyani branch came to its own only towards the end of the dynastic rule in Badami and there was nearly a 200-year period when this branch was dormant.

The reign of the Chalukyas had its own cycle of ups and downs, victories and defeats. It is interesting to note that they were never vanquished and never vanished for six centuries. Several important rulers were the main architect of their existence.

Pulakesin I

Pulakesin was the eldest son of Ranaraga. Pulakesin's rule, which started in c.540, is also the beginning of clear records regarding the dynasty, which give a convincing chronology of important events of that time.

NAME	OF	THE	REMARKS
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PRIMARY SOURCE	
ROCK INSCRIPTION OF BADAMI	FROM THIS INSCRIPTION IT IS CLEAR THAT PULAKESIN I RULED AT LEAST UPTO C. 567 A.D.

The most important achievement was the shifting of capital to the fort that he built in Vatapi. It was located near Malaprabha River. Pulakesin I left behind a stable and considerably enlarged kingdom to his two sons-Kirtivarman I and Mangalesa.

Kirtivarman I

Kirtivarman I, came to the throne around 566-567 A.D. He was referred to also as Kirtiraja in some inscriptions. **The Badami inscriptions give the starting date of Kirtivarman's 12th regnal year as c.578 A.D. that in turn confirms the year c.566A.D. as his coronation year.**

The Aihole Prasasti is more factual and can also be corroborated with other sources to unearth the Chalukyan history . The Chalukya king expanded the kingdom towards the north-west where the Mauryas ruled the Konkan region of present day Maharashtra. Kirtivarman I annexed the Maurya territories and appointed a governor-possibly a maternal uncle-to rule the province. At the peak of Kirtivarman's conquests, the Chalukya kingdom was built around Badami stretching to the Konkan in the north-west; Shimoga, including Dharwar and Belgaum, in the south; and up to the Guntur district which also included Bellary and Karnool to the north-east in Andhra region.

Kirtivarman can be considered the first paramount sovereign of the Chalukya dynasty, achieving the status purely by virtue of his own capabilities.

CHALUKYAS OF BADAMI AFTER KIRTIVARMAN I

Family records clearly show that Kirtivarman had three sons-Pulakesin II, Vishnuvradhana, and Budhavarasa-who were all minors at the time of his death. Therefore, his younger brother Mangalesa assumed the role of regent.

The rule of Mangalesa is a prominent period in Chalukyan history.Early in his reign he invaded the Kalachuri kingdom, at that time ruled by King Buddharaja and consisting of Gujarat, Kathiawad and Nasik districts, and defeated their forces. The Chalukya domain extended to the River Mahi and it is highly probable that Mangalesa attacked or raided the Kalachuri territories multiple times. He then conquered **Revatidvipa (present day Goa)** south of Ratnagiri district on the Konkan coast. At the end of his reign the Chalukyan empire extended from the

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lower part of Gujarat and Kathiawad to the northern regions of Karnataka and encompassed the Bellary and Karnool regions of Andhra.

The regent turned king, rejected to hand over power to Pulakesin II on his reaching the age to be crowned king. After a civil war Mangalesa was killed. It resulted the starting point of the glorious period of the Chalukyas under the leadership of **PULAKESIN-II**.

PULAKESIN-II

Pulakesin-II's rule has been chronicled in a large number of sources. Evidence permits fixing the actual date of the coronation of Pulakesin-II. Pulakesin's Hyderabad inscription is dated 613 A.D. , and was issued during the third year of his reign, which suggests that he must have ascended the throne in c. 610–611 A.D.. Pulakesin-II's military exploits are also mentioned in the records of the Chalukyas of Kalyani, written at a later date. However, since they were a sub-branch of the Badami Chalukyas, it can be presumed that some of the claims were embellished and therefore some amount of doubt regarding the authenticity of all the claims exists. However, the Pallavas of Kanchi, traditional adversaries of the Chalukyas also mention details of Pulakesin-II's rule and military victories.

MENTION MAY BE MADE OF SOME INSCRIPTIONS:

REGNAL YEAR	TYPE & NAME OF PRIMARY SOURCE	REMARKS
1 st	Yekkeri Rock Inscription	FOUND IN Yekkeri
3rd	Hyderabad Copper Plates dated BETWEEN c.612 & c.613	SUPPORTING THE INFORMATION RELATED TO THE CORONATION OF PULAKESIN-II. ACCORDING TO THIS IT CAN BE SAID THAT HE WAS CORONATED BETWEEN c. 610 & c.611 A.D.
24 TH	The Aihole Prasasti	This record written in praise of the king is reliably dated to C.634 and as having been written by Ravikirti the court poet. It provides a realistic chronological order and also

		particulars of the military exploits of Pulakesin-II and his ancestors.
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MILITARY ACHIEVEMENTS

The first rulers who rebelled at the discomfiture of the Chalukyas brought about by the Civil War were Appayika and Govinda. It is assumed that they were the rulers of the region located in the north of the River Bhima. At this early stage of his reign, the young Pulakesin displayed commendable statesmanship and used a combination of diplomacy and military skill to subdue the threat. He created dissention between the two and separated them from each other by winning over Govinda by bestowing favours on him. Appayika was defeated in battle and subsequently Govinda was overthrown.

The Kadambas (**a group of families, interlinked and related, with the primarily family based around Banavasi**) had been defeated and made into a feudatory by Pulakesin's father but they seem to have rebelled and declared independence in the wake of the Civil War. However, Pulakesin comprehensively defeated them. He compelled the Kadambas to surrender. Pulakesin uprooted the Kadamba ruler, probably Bhojivarman, and annexed the kingdom. He actually destroyed the Kadambas forever. Mention may be made of Aihole Prasasti. The picture of devastated Banavasi was inscribed in Aihole Prasasti .

The Alupas(identity of the Alupas is debatable . It is likely that they were at some time in the past allies of the Kadambas,) also accepted the supremacy of the chalukyas . Unlike Kadmbas the Alupas decided to bypass the conflict. After the defeat of Kadambas they decided not to confront the victorious Chalukya king. They acknowledged the overlordship of the Chalukyas.

Matrimonial alliances also played an important role. Here mention may be made of The Gangas ruler. The Ganga King Durvinita gave his daughter in marriage to Pulakesin- II. The Gangas were in a unending state of conflict with them. The Pallavas had conquered part of Ganga territory, annexing the district of Kongunadu to their kingdom. The Gangas wanted to regain the area . They wanted to use matrimonial alliance with Pulakesin II for that purpose. From the

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Chalukyan viewpoint, the acceptance of their sovereignty by the Gangas assured their supremacy of western Deccan.

King Mahasivagupta of Dakshina Kosala accepted the sovereignty of the Pulakesin II. Kalinga, ruled by the Eastern Gangas also accepted Chalukya overlordship. There is scant information regarding the details of how this was achieved, but it is certain that no military plan was involved in making these two kingdoms Chalukya feudatories.

The Latas ruled the territory situated south of the River Kim with Navasarika, modern day Navasari in Gujarat, as their capital. They were part of the Kalachuri domain of Buddhiraja before he was defeated by Mangalesa. Pulakesin II recaptured the territory by force and installed Vijayavarmaraja, as the viceroy. Following the **Kaira plates** it can be said that the territory was under the control of Chalukyan rulers up to c.643 A.D. There is a view that is expressed that the Malava kings were earlier feudatories of the Chalukyas who also rebelled at an opportune moment and operated independently for some years. However, this is not corroborated and is highly unlikely to have been the situation. It is certain that their territory was in close proximity to the Chalukya borders and fear of the Vardhana strength and their obvious animosity drove the Malava kings to the Chalukya camp.

The Gurjara kingdom was situated between the Rivers Kim and Mahi with the Latas to the south and Malavas to the east. The Gurjara king Dadda II assisted the Maitraka king in his fight against Harshavardhana and submitted to Chalukya overlordship along with the Malavas, although he did not share a geographical border with the Chalukya kingdom. Although there was some confusion in determining whether the Gurjara ruler who submitted to Pulakesin was of the Broach or Mandor branch of the family, combining information from different sources confirm that he was of the Broach branch of the Gurjara clan. The Latas, Malavas and Gurjaras accepted Chalukya overlordship of their own accord and there are no indications of any major military action in this region in the Chalukya chronicles or the local history.

PULAKESIN II & KANAUIJ KING HARSHVARDHANA

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The most important event during the Pulakesin-II's command of the victorious Chalukya military forces was his defeat of the **Kanauj king Harshvardhana**. This was the clash of the titans of the era-Harshvardhana the great ruler of the north and Pulakesin the acknowledged lord of the South. The reason for the conflict is unclear and still obscure and shrouded in conjuncture. The two empires did not share a common border, therefore border dispute as a primary cause can be effectively ruled out. The Latas, Malavas and the Gurjaras ruled the buffer states and had accepted Chalukya overlordship. They displayed a shared animosity towards the Vardhana kingdom from the time of Prabhakaravardhana and this could also have been a reason for their acceptance of Chalukya protection. Considering the long-standing enmity between the three buffer states and the Vardhana dynasty, the Chalukyas providing them with protection could have further irritated the imperial Harsha.

By the time of the conflict both the kings were paramount rulers of in their respective areas and both could have nurtured the ambition to test the strength of the other. Essentially this was a test for ultimate supremacy that was waiting to happen. Therefore, the reason for the actual conflict has very little meaning in the larger scheme of things. It is certain that Harsha was resentful of the Southern king's power and sought to invade his feudatories. It is equally clear that Pulakesin viewed Harsha as the northern enemy, although this epithet is in all probabilities the addition of a later day historian, biased in favour of the Chalukya king.

There is a debate on the locale of the historic battle. Vincent Smith, the renowned historian, states that since Harsha accepted the River Narmada as the dividing line between the two kingdoms at the end of the war, the battle must have been fought on its banks. This cannot be true since Harsha's empire did not reach the Narmada and he would have had to conquer the Malavas and Gurjaras before reaching its banks. It is certain that such a conquest did not take place. **Hieun Tsang** testifies to the fact that the three buffer states never submitted to Harsha and confirms their independent status at the time of the conflict. Therefore, the battle would have taken place in some place far to the north of River Narmada and not on its banks. The acceptance of Narmada as the dividing line between the two empires itself is a wrong premise since the three buffer states continued their independent existence even after the battle.

Several instances helps us to say that Pulakesin-Harsha conflict could not have taken place before c.629 A.D. Because it is claimed that the assumption of the title 'Parameswara' was associated with Pulakesin-II's defeat and conquest of other contemporary dynasties and kingdoms, which came to be linked to Harsha's

defeat only in the later recounting of the dynastic history. It is also important to note that the Gurjara ruler Dadda II had defended the Maitraka ruler Dhruvabhata against the incursion of Harshavardhana and the earliest known date for Dadda II is 629. It is therefore surmised that the Pulakesin-Harsha conflict could not have taken place before this date.

The defeat of Harshavardhana was the single most important achievement of Pulakesin. The records of Adityavarman, the successor to Pulakesin, reaffirms the victory while clearly mentioning Harsha as the defeated king in question. The victory is thereafter mentioned in detail in a large number of Chalukya records. The veracity of the battle and the defeat of Harsha is also attested in the dynastic records of the Rashtrakutas. Considering that the Rashtrakutas were traditional adversaries of the Chalukyas, their records have to be considered as being truthful in their reportage. Harsha's defeat has proverbial fame in the Chalukya dynastic history with the Kalyani-Lata and Vengi sub-branches also praising the achievement as the most significant event in their history. Therefore, the assumption of the title Parameswara, which is in itself uncommon, cannot be taken as the egoistic postulation of an inflated personality but the declaration of a victorious king celebrating a specific and important event not only for him but for the entire dynasty.

THE CHALUKYA-PALLAVA RIVALRY

With the conquest of the Vishnukundin kingdom, the buffer between the Chalukyas and the Pallavas, the emerging power in the Peninsula, vanished. Further, until they were conquered by Pulakesin the Vishnukundins had been Pallava allies and therefore, the Pallavas considered this invasion an insult to their power. It was only natural that the powerful Pallavas opposed the assertion of Chalukya power in areas that had so far been considered their sphere of influence. The Aihole Prasasti unequivocally mentions the growing power of the Pallavas and alludes to the mounting rivalry between the two dynasties. This situation initially led to a number of minor clashes and skirmishes between the two kingdoms, although they were uniformly indecisive. However, with mounting tension, major clashes were not far away.

Pulakesin took the initiative to settle the simmering issue and around 618-619 pushed the Pallavas into their capital Kanchipura, subsequently vanquishing the Pallava king Mahendravarman I. It is clear that the Chalukya intention was suppression and not capture or even conquest, since no action was initiated to deprive the adversary of political independence, after the military victory. After the

Pallava king was defeated, Pulakesin pushed further south as far as the River Kavery. It is a testimony to the military genius of the Chalukya king that he appreciated the difficulties in securing the long line of communication and logistic supply and adopted a policy of conciliation with the Southern kingdoms who were located south of the Pallava kingdom, rather than attempting subjugation. The fact that these kingdoms were very prosperous and well-administered may also have influenced this decision to befriend them. This is also a suitable example of the Mandala Theory of envelopment being used in practical diplomacy. Pulakesin returned in triumph to his capital Badami and almost immediately the Pallavas regained their lost authority.

Pulakesin II was now the sovereign ruler of an empire that was bounded by three oceans and the Vindhya mountain ranges in the north. However, this did not dampen the rivalry and struggle for supremacy with the Pallavas that continued unabated. Although the Pallava king was defeated, the campaign was inconclusive as demonstrated by the rapidity with which the Pallavas returned to dominate the scene on Pulakesin's return to his stronghold. A few years later, Narasimhavarman ascended the Pallava throne and was clearly ambitious to regain territory lost during his father's defeat at the hands of the Chalukya king. At this stage there may have been punitive Pallava raids into Chalukya controlled territories or their feudatories. The provocation was sufficient for Pulakesin to mount another military expedition against the Pallavas. It is definite that the Chalukyas initiated the attack and not the Pallavas since all the clashes took place in Pallava territory. However, this time around the end-results were somewhat different from the first expedition. Pulakesin could not besiege the capital like the previous campaign and decided to push further south to extend the area of conquest while bypassing Kanchipura. The Pallavas gave battle at Pariyala, Suramara, and Manimangala-all in their own territory-and gradually started to repulse the invaders. This slow reversal of fortunes was the beginning of the final Chalukya defeat. At this stage the Pallavas had managed to create a sort of loose Confederacy with other Southern kingdoms. There came into being an uneasy cease-fire between the two antagonists for a few years with only minimal sparring taking place. This was also the time of the visit of Hieun Tsang who does not report any details of the raging Chalukya-Pallava rivalry.

Once he was certain of the support of the Southern allies, **Narasimhavarman initiated a campaign into Chalukya territory.** For the first time during his reign Pulakesin II was being attacked in his own area. The Pallavas won a number of battles and advanced on the capital, Badami. The exact date of the final battle cannot be traced but it is clear that Pulakesin II was killed in this battle and the Pallava general Siruthodar Paranjoti captured Badami. In this

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campaign the Pallavas were assisted by a prince of Ceylon called Manivarman, confirming the age old connection between the Peninsula and the island nation. This momentous victory is affirmed by the title of **Vatapi-Konda**, being bestowed on Narasimhavarman in all records following the battle. Further, there is an inscription on the back wall of the famous Mallikarjun Temple at Badami mentioning the Pallava victory and the capture and burning of the capital. This dates to the 13 year of Narasimhavarman's rule, corresponding to c.642A.D. -c.643 A.D. **This was an end to a brilliant military commander.** The kingdom went into the depths of trouble and decline immediately after the sacking of its capital.

END OF AN ERA

Pulakesin II was a great ruler of that time. **Hieun Tsang records** that after visiting Kanchipura he reached Mo-ha-la-cha, Maharashtra, one of the earliest references to the region by that name. He writes of the powerful king Pu-la-ke-she who controlled a number of feudatories, was a Kshatriya by birth, and ruled a very prosperous kingdom. He praises the warrior-like qualities of the king and particularly mentions the gallant nature of the Chalukya army. It is also important to note that the Chalukyas had a great maritime power.

Pulakesin II was known far and wide and accepted as the Supreme ruler of the Deccan and the South. The Persian historian **Tabari (838-923)** records the presence of a Chalukyan ambassador in the Persian court, send sometime during the 26 years of Pulakesin's reign. In his account Pulakesin is referred variously as Pramesha and Pharmis, presumably a Persian variation of the title Parameswara. The return embassy send by King Khusru Perviz II and their reception at the Chalukya court is depicted in Cave No I in the Ajanta caves and could be dated between c.600A.D. and c. 625 A.D.

By all accounts Chalukya military power reached its pick during the reign of Pulakesin II, and also reached its first nadir at his death at the hands of the victorious Pallava king Narasimhavarman. Even a cursory analysis of the career of Pulakesin reveals that while he was a great military commander in the field, he did not cater for administrative overstretch in terms of his annexations and the fatigue that must have enveloped his army after decades of continuous campaigning. The

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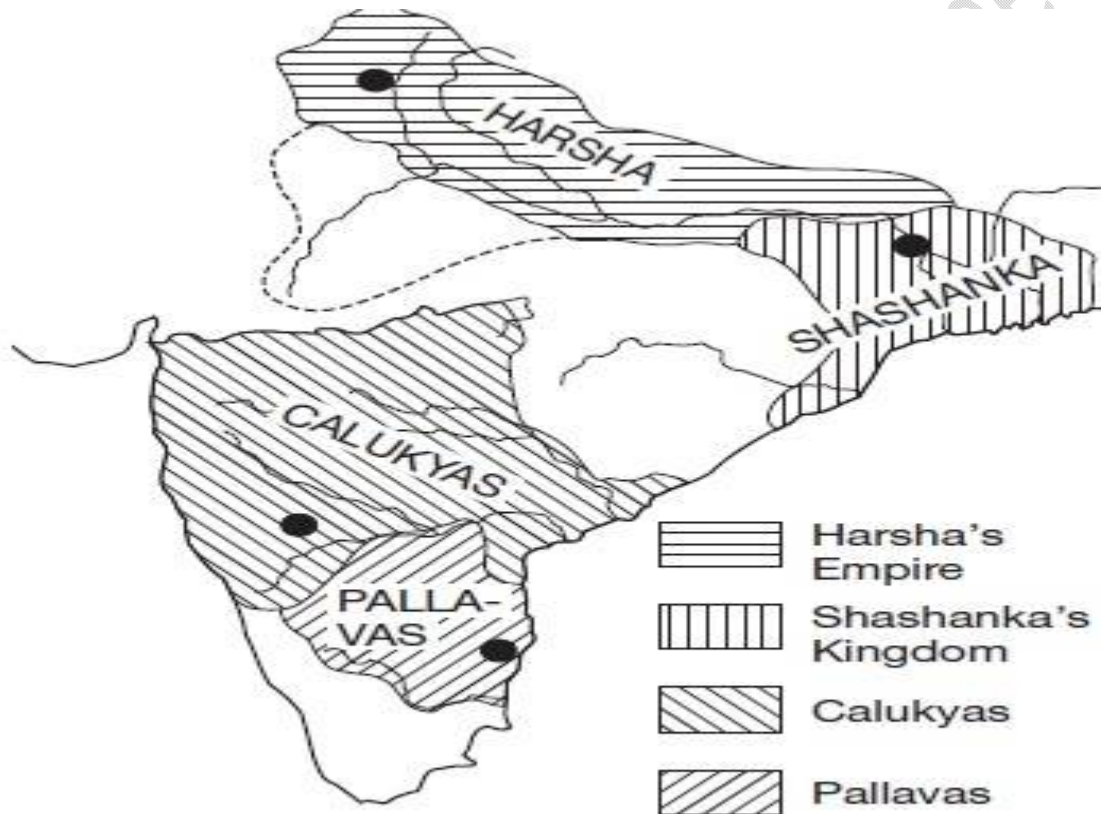
indication of his dwindling power and hold on conquered areas should have been noted when the Pallavas almost immediately came back to power on Pulakesin's withdrawal after his first Southern invasion. In the case of the Chalukyas, Pulakesin II emerging victorious in the civil war but not yet fully confident of his hold on power had to pacify the Vengi branch through granting autonomy and ceding further territory to them. It is also seen that this collateral branch kept carefully out of the conflict when the Pallava king defeated the same Pulakesin and overran Badami in their victorious march against the core dynasty. The Chalukyas of Vengi did not offer any assistance in this hour of need of the primary family. Similarly it was the incompetence of the Lata branch that permitted the rise to power of the Rashtrakutas that ultimately culminated in the demise of the Chalukyas as a whole. Permitting the sub-branches to assume autonomy and greater power than they were able to wield to good effect proved to be a short-sighted and wrong policy for the Badami Chalukyas in the long-term. It only contributed to the gradual erosion of political influence of the core family and weakened what was effectively a centralised system of administration.

The most glorious military period in the history of the Badami Chalukyas came to an equally vainglorious end-military defeat, the death of the king, and the pillage of his capital.

CHALUKYAS OF BADAMI AFTER PULAKESIN II

After the death of Pulakesin-II, Badami and some of the southern districts remained in the hand of Pallavas. Though Chalukyas throne remained vacant from 642 AD - 655 AD, Vikramaditya-I managed to ascend the throne in 655 AD. He recovered Badami and brought the whole kingdom under his control. The next successor Vinayaditya ruled from 681 to 696 AD and carried on campaigns against Cholas, Pandyas, Pallavas, Aluvans . By defeating the lord of the entire Uttarapatha, he acquired the banner **Palidhvaja**. His immediate successor Vijayaditya ruled for nearly forty years (c.696 AD – c.733 AD). His reign was stated to have been peaceful throughout. Vikramaditya-II was son and successor of Vijayaditya. He ruled from c.734 AD – c.745 AD. He defeated the Pallava king .He destroyed the power of the Chola, Kerala, Pandya. The son of Vikramaditya-II, Kritivarman - II succeeded to reign for the next eleven years. He was the last and glorious ruler of Chalukyas of Badami. *Like other ruling power of Indian history,*

the Chalukya of Badami also declined owing to several factors and gave away the political reins to the Rashtrakuta.



Regional kingdoms in the early seventh century

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